

People - Bennett

Article 22: Lansing Bennett*

The purpose of this article, sponsored by the Conservation Commission, is to honor the memory of Dr. Lansing Bennett, the acknowledged leader of a remarkable conservation movement.

During the 1960's, a small group of town environmental activists was formed whose goal was to purchase and preserve as much of the Town's open space as necessary to protect its aquifers, forests, salt marshes and streams. The vision and efforts of this group led by Dr. Bennett, first as a member, chairman, of the Conservation Commission for over a decade, have provided us with the beautiful environmental settings which we, as residents, enjoy today. He was also instrumental in protecting our water supply and for passage of wetlands protection legislation.

Dr. Bennett's contribution to the Town: "What you bought when you chose Duxbury is almost entirely attributable to the tireless work of Lansing Bennett. If many others shared his vision of a town spared from running' amok in suburban sprawl, Bennett stood out as the clear leader modern-day resource conservation and wildlife protection. He was the one who strategized the passage of countless land acquisitions; proposals at town meetings; he was the one who persuaded the voters to invest in growth management as an alternative to endlessly financing the effects of unchecked development."

The Clipper article goes on to note that Dr. Bennett incurred no personal gain from his efforts, but did what he did because it was the right thing to do.

It is also noteworthy that during Dr. Bennett's tenure (1967-1979) on the Conservation Commission, town land set aside, for conservation increased from 109 acres to 1,340 acres. Today, Town Conservation land has further increased to 2,300 acres.

At age 50, Dr. Bennett decided on a career change, closed his practice and went to work for the CIA as a physician and intelligence analyst. He traveled extensively as the Agency's chief medical officer covering Southeast Asia, lived in Brazil for a year and returned to live in Reston, Virginia.

Sadly, during 1993, he and another man were the victims of a sniper shooting as they were driving to work outside CIA headquarters.

The area described in this article was named "Trout Farm" by the 1975 ATM and therefore requires Town Meeting action to be renamed. The name "Lansing Bennett Forest" will serve to remind future generations of the legacy left by this remarkable man.

I would like to note, also, that this legacy is being carried forward by Dr. Bennett's daughter, the very capable and dedicated Holly Morris, in her present capacity as chairman of the Community Preservation Committee.

The Finance Committee recommends your approval of this article.

*The entry above was an address to the Town of Duxbury's Annual Town Meeting in March 2005 made by Paul Arsenian of the Finance Committee . The article was approved by the town meeting. – David Murphy March 30, 2005